

【個人研究】

Of Towers and Fledgling Empires: A Comparison of America's Washington Monument and Japan's Ametsuchi no Motohashira

Graham Jimu*

塔と駆け出しの帝国：
アメリカのワシントンモニュメントと日本の八紘之基柱との比較

グラハム 児夢

古代の「塔」でも、現代の「タワー」でも、「偉大さ」を志す国民にとって、この建設企画はどういう意味があるのか。21世紀の場合も、電波塔としての実用性はあっても、必要以上に高く建てるケースが世界中多く見られる。それは愛国の表現なのか、地元の自慢なのか、どちらにしてもプロパガンダの媒体として解釈されても怪しくない。この論文は比較文化論として過去における政治的に色濃い実例を取り上げる。太平洋に面している二つのスーパーパワーとしてぶつかり合った大日本帝国とアメリカ合衆国は明らかに文化的にも、歴史的にも、異なる政治体制を持つ国だ。両国の領土拡張が盛大な時代に大規模な「塔」造りで国民の士気が高められた。比較する価値のある代表的なものは19世紀半ば頃の「マニフェスト・デスティニー」という使命を抱えているアメリカの連邦首都にある「ワシントン・モニュメント」と「八紘一字」を唱える絶頂にあった大日本帝国の宮崎市にある「八紘之基柱」なのである。

Key words : towers, Washington Monument, Heiwadai, Miyazaki, Freemasons

The foci of this paper are towers conceived with a nationalist vision, one remaining a world famous tourist site, the other of limited renown. The Washington Monument represented to the American people certain virtues perceived to belong to the first president of their new republic, a man who had been dead for nearly a half century prior to the laying of the cornerstone on July 4, 1848, but still a mortal whose earthly voice was a waning memory for those privileged citizens yet living who had actually heard it. And on the other side of the globe in the historically remote and sleepy semi-tropical town of Miyazaki, Japan, is

the 37-meter high reinforced-concrete Ametsuchi no Motohashira, a tower designed in a “purely Japanese style” completed in late 1940 as part of the grand *Kigensetsu*, celebrations five years in planning, that marked what was said to be the 2,600th year of the unbroken Imperial line (Mimata 92). Both the young American republic and the newly modernized Japan, despite their obvious historical and cultural differences, infused their respective tower-building projects with ancient lore to ennoble modern expansionist ambitions as only good propaganda could.

Before examining the similarities – and the admitted differences – some terms need to be clarified.

* ぐらはむ じむ 文教大学文学部英米語英米文学科

The meaning of 'tower' for this discussion

This paper is concerned only with towers that do not serve as everyday human habitats. Google the English word 'tower' for 'images' and heading the list, not surprisingly, is the Eiffel Tower, said to be the world's most visited "paid monument" – but surely not an ordinary French office worker's permanent address. As a loanword, the same google in Japanese (タワー) calls up an artist's conception of Sumida Ward with its Skytree "new culture" at full flower. In its plural form, however, whether as English or Japanese loanword from English (タワーズ) the word connotes habitation, namely condominiums. The Chinese-Japanese term for 'tower' – tou (塔) – when googled produces as premier image an Old Masters painting of the Tower of Babel, one of many posted on a personal blog devoted to art history's connection with that subject and its "lessons." Why make a difference? To Japanese linguistic sensibilities, English is 'new' (tower) and Chinese is ancient (*tou*). The odd-numbered tiered pagodas of Buddhist temples are certainly not referred to in Japanese as 'towers,' but as *gojyuu-no-tou*. *Yagura*, on the other hand, as a 'pure' Japanese term is used to mean 'watchtower' – whether on a castle or as a free-standing structure from which commanding views of towns and villages help prevent or minimize damage from fires.

So how many of these towers (in the so-called modern 'English' sense) exist on a grand scale inside Japan? Setting the standard arbitrarily at any tower soaring above a round 250 meters, there are only the Skytree (634 meters) and Tokyo Tower (332.6 meters). Regionally, however, a thumbnail sketch reveals East Asia containing a little more than a fourth of the world's tallest free-standing towers.



"Tawaa" and "Tou." Tobu World Square in Kinugawa, Tochigi prefecture. Precision scale models of the 7th-century twin pagodas of Yakushiji juxtaposed with a model of the Skytree in the distance. The principles of construction that make pagodas earthquake resistant are employed in the Skytree design.

Fourteen of them, the great majority, are in China. North America has considerably fewer than western Europe where the most ambitious tower-builders are the Germans ("List").

Not surprisingly, the inception of many of the world's uninhabited free-standing towers is tied to commemoration of an important national event or beloved public figure. The Eiffel Tower is the world's best known example in the modern age. Built for the Exposition Universelle, it served as an arch under which visitors would pass to attend what was the 1889 World's Fair, held concurrently with the centenary of the French Revolution and the rebirth of the nation ("Eiffel").

And then there is the monument commemorating another type of revolution, or rather a celebrated revolutionary figure, conversely ancient in its girderless simplicity, yet a reflection of a whole new type of personality cult, neither religious nor royal.

The greatest American hero?

George Washington's hagiography is overflowing. Artistic tributes in his namesake capital city floodlight his secular sainthood with unabashedly worshipful titles, the Raphaelesque "Apotheosis of George Washington" by the Italian fresco painter Constantino Brumidi (1805-1880) being one case in point. It graces the ceiling of the neoclassical capitol dome itself, portraying in massive scale the former land surveyor cum soldier as Christ-like, surrounded by angelic maidens, each representing one of the original thirteen states, with goddesses Liberty and Victory at his sides. According to religion scholar Gary Laderman, the death of George Washington ...

... transformed into a heroic event that regenerated and rejuvenated the body politic; the various celebrations associated with the burial of his invisible body conveyed a sense of social cohesion that many believed distinguished the American republic from other nations in the world. In addition, at the time of his death and during the services commemorating his passing, Washington continued to be imagined as an agent of Providence, remembered with a series of rituals and mythic narratives that reconfirmed the chosen, millennial destiny of the country in world history as prefigured in political and religious rhetoric from before the Revolutionary War ... (17)

And upon the Mall there stands in Washington's memory the world's tallest obelisk at 169 meters, an ancient Egyptian symbol of the sun god Ra designed by Robert Mills of

South Carolina, one of the few fully-trained professional architects in the new nation (Kimball). The neo-Egyptian "proto-Greek" obelisk was for 19th-century Americans a popular shape for grave-markers precisely because its vertical simplicity took up less space and was cheaper to produce (Whiffen and Koeper 178, Farber). Some tombstone designers had access to the recently published twenty-one French-language volumes on ancient and contemporary Egyptian tomb art and architecture as observed by the expeditionary forces under Napoleon's command (McDowell 154).

Mills's initial idea included a chariot-bound Zeus-like Washington triumphantly surveying the landscape atop a Greek temple, but – and some say mercifully – this plan was shelved due to cost and other circumstances beyond the control of the project planners (Ricks). Today, the obelisk on its own, surrounded by the fifty flags of the Union, one for each state, is the finished product we cannot imagine as being anything different.

The full sense of ancient mystery and power borne by the original Egyptian obelisks could be reinterpreted in the context of the American experience as a no-nonsense embodiment of 'things-are-looking-up' straightforwardness appealing to the common man. But even with the economizing on design, completing the monument was a process prolonged by internal strife ("Washington Monument"). In the span of years between the laying of the cornerstone and the monument's finishing touches, a civil war would tear the nation asunder, seven new states would be added to the Union, all serving as battlegrounds with the indigenous peoples who claimed land within them, and with a population growing from 23 million to 56 million – among them roughly ten million immigrants (Harvard).

Throughout the ordeals leading to disunion, the immortal Virginian was a rock solid symbol of what Americans wanted to believe about themselves. Speaker of the House Robert C. Winthrop, speaking at the cornerstone-laying ceremony on July 4, 1848, sang Washington's praises: "Build (the monument) to the skies," he said, "you cannot outreach the loftiness of his principles." Without the physical presence of a budding monument in view, the eloquent Winthrop grasped the opportunity to urge a renewal "to each other our vows of allegiance and devotion to the American Union," adding that "this widespread republic is the true monument to Washington" (Munn 23-4). It was therefore a stinging irony that the first president, a son of Virginia, adorned in equestrian pose the Great Seal of the Confederacy; more than what the Union had become, it was argued, the Confederacy bore a far closer resemblance to the essence of the American Revolution (Thomas 221).

Two decades after the Civil War, President Chester Alan Arthur in his last official act in that capacity, reminded the nation at the monument dedication ceremony, held on Washington's birthday, February 22, 1885, that no human being could match the first president for intelligence and virtue:

Well may he ever keep the foremost place in the hearts of his countrymen. The faith that never faltered; the wisdom that was broader and deeper than any learning taught in schools; the courage that shrank from no peril and was dismayed by no defeat; the loyalty that kept all selfish purpose subordinate to the demands of patriotism and honor; the sagacity that displayed itself in camp and cabinet alike, and above all that

harmonious union of moral and intellectual qualities which has never found its parallel among men ... (qtd in Morris)

Thus the capital city's stellar monument was born. Later in the year the nation would see its first skyscraper over a thousand kilometers to the west in the city of Chicago. It would be a structure ten storeys in height bearing a light iron framework as opposed to bricks, the precursor to a boom that would come to symbolize the technology of the future and a new frontier for the American people (Marshall).

The classical past

As close to nobility as any American could ever come, George Washington was admired deeply for the ignoble things he did *not* do, namely wallow in the self-aggrandizing opportunism that characterized the powerful abroad. He was portrayed in sculpture by the Frenchman Jean-Antoine Houdon as the American Cincinnatus, a leader who preferred the simple planter's life to that of public servant, though never shirking his duty to a country that needed him. And so the United States needed their most unifying personality to guide them through a trying start-up as their first Chief Executive, a steady military man like the great Roman, and at a time when many informed Americans, imitating the intellectual trends common in England at the time, were well-read enough in classical literature to know who Cincinnatus actually was, and could appreciate the compelling similarities between themselves as members of a budding republic and the cultured citizens of ancient Rome (Cothran). Writes Marcus Cunliff in his biography of Washington:

Rome was a martial civilization, always aware of the unrest along the frontiers, the bringer of law and imposer of order. Roman culture was a trifle hard and unsubtle. Or at any rate rooted in reality rather than raptly poetic; religious feeling was moderate in tone, excess being deplored. Rome was a slave-holding society in which (outside the capital and the provincial centers) the unit of neighborhood was a farm estate. It was a society that relied upon the family as the cohesive force. Affection, respect, loyalty spread outward from the family, which was thus the state in microcosm. This was a society that bred solid, right-thinking citizens, at once civic and acquisitive, men of a noble narrowness, seeing further than their noses but not agitating themselves with vain speculation. Such are the implications of words like *gravitas* (seriousness), *pietas* (regard for discipline and authority), *simplicitas* (lucidity). (163)

Latin and Greek were commonly taught and a solid command of both ancient languages was expected of any college entrant. In a country 'without a history,' the classics provided a rich tapestry of precedent to which to refer in designing and developing a sound self-disciplined representative democracy. Political literature of the time frequently mentioned the works of the Greeks and Romans, most notably as presented in Plutarch's *Lives*, from which telling pseudonyms were characteristically borrowed (MacDonald 67-8). American artists of the 18th century, too, were expected to clothe their military heroes in classical-era attire, risking scandal in doing otherwise (Kamerer and Nolley). Into the turbulent 19th century the reference to the

classical past persisted, especially in the rhetoric of the great orators such as Daniel Webster whose "Evils of Dismemberment" message was included in *The Eclectic Fourth Reader* of educator-preacher William H. McGuffey, one in a series of textbooks that in its day was read by millions. In it Webster compared constitutional liberty to "well-proportioned columns" that could never be restored if allowed "a mournful ... melancholy immortality" like the ruins of ancient Greece and Rome. "Let us trust," advises the great statesman, "to the influence of Washington's example" (236-7).

The first President of the United States, a man who would not be king, was already a legend in his own time and an anchor for securing the future. His Farewell Address articulated an isolationist message that resonated in American perceptions of world events well into the 20th century, until Japanese expansionist policies placed the United States squarely in the role of global policeman. Washington also believed that internal political rifts would weaken the nation, cautioning in vain against factionalism. Houdon's famous sculpture of George Washington, created for the Roman-inspired capitol building in Richmond, Virginia, (Maison Carrée at Nîmes, France), features at the towering general's side a tightly bonded bundle of thirteen wooden rods, each signifying one of the thirteen original states. Known as a *fascis*, it represented to the Romans the power of authority; it was an appropriate and long familiar symbol of unity to Americans (the reverse of the Roman god "Mercury" dime), and in a later century became the root word of one of the world's most undemocratic political movements, central to Japanese governance in 1940: fascism.



A bronze replica of Jean-Antoine Houdon's Washington stands outside London's National Gallery facing Trafalgar Square. (Photo by author.)

Land of the gods

We may laugh today at a painting of Washington ascending into heaven, but artists of the time were obviously not trying to be funny, seeking to portray the first president as demigod, festooning him with the symbolism of Christian and classical art, demonstrating palpably how far republicanism had approached a civil religion in the national psyche. However, whatever emotional bonds Americans may have felt with the ancient Greeks, Romans or even early Christians could not compare with the bonds Japanese felt with their ancestors during the peak years of Japan's empire. Reverence for the Japanese emperor was solemnly taught in the schools to captive pupils, but as Kenneth J. Ruoff notes in his book *Imperial Japan at Its Zenith*, "no one forced adults to purchase the millions upon millions of magazines and books that glorified the 2,600-year national history" (55). Mainstream Japanese, at least on the surface, took their imperial line's descent from the gods as literally as any Christian takes literally the story of the Virgin Birth or the

Resurrection. And, just as tours of the Vatican or Holyland exist for the 'true believers' and the profiteers, myths of the indigenous Japanese gods were the subject of 'pilgrimages' spurred on by government propaganda and regional interest in tourism.

On November 10, 1940 the people of Imperial Japan were called on to observe and celebrate the 2,600th anniversary of Jimmu's enthronement and the uniquely unbroken lineage that famously characterized Japan's imperial household. The event was conceived as a top-down means of tightening the screws of patriotic cohesion on the local level, embracing citizens of all ages with a flurry of events and contests designed to strengthen Japan's bonds with its mythic past through giving the ancients a new relevance in the present (Havens 56). Ruoff has described the event as an opportunity for the codification of history. It also functioned to promote 'imperial heritage tourism' within Japan and outside Japan proper, namely Korea and Manchuria, while seeking ways of preserving Japanese identity among those living outside the 'Fatherland.' Emperor Jimmu, Japan's first emperor, is considered a fiction by scholars of today. Yet questioning his existence in 1940, let alone the divine origin of Hirohito himself, was an invitation for official persecution (Havens 23). Ruoff notes that to date "no explicit, official attempt to repudiate the imperial myths" has been forthcoming (188).

As with George Washington, Emperor Jimmu is the name of a key leader in a struggle to bring forth a nation. Appropriately enough for 1940, the first emperor was a military man on a mission of conquest. For a young Washington's part in the modern era, 'conquest' entailed laying waste to the homeland of British-sympathizing Iroquois, earning for him the Iroquois language nickname of "Hanadahguyus" – meaning "Town Destroyer" (Washburn).

As evidence that history can repeat itself, the chronicle basis for what is known of Emperor Jimmu's six-year expedition to bring enlightenment to the "eastern barbarians" is itself, like the great *Kigensetsu* of 1940 (the aforementioned national celebration of the 2,600th anniversary of Jimmu's ascension), crafted to justify a right to rule by digging up and brushing off the glories of an imaginary past. Completed in 720 AD by a collaboration of imperial prince and aristocrat, the *Nihon Shoki* (*The Chronicles of Japan*) was loosely based on continental precedents, but conceived as a means of making the powerful appear divinely sanctioned through the creation of a history fused with mythology (Ryan). It should be noted that nearly thirteen centuries had passed between the time Emperor Jimmu supposedly breathed the last of his 126-year life and the eighth-century 'history.'

We need look no further than the English-language homepage of Miyazaki Prefecture's Tourist Resort Section to see how the mythology and ancient history of Japan are so closely linked that one is confused with the other. The confusion can be interpreted as a playful one in a contemporary context, but was far from the case over seventy years ago:

Miyazaki plays a prominent part in Japanese mythology, as it is believed to be the home of the Gods who created Japan. There are many places in Miyazaki that have links to these Gods and their deeds that are mentioned in the ancient myths and legends, and many reminders of this distant past, such as the Saitobaru Burial Mounds still remain today. ("About Miyazaki")

Not 'was believed,' but 'is believed.'
The Greeks of old explained their history by

similarly intertwining myth with history. Homer's epics offer evidence of that; Homer's tremendous influence on Western literature is widely acknowledged and Troy is described as a very real archeological site in Turkey. One can find nutshell summaries of *The Iliad* online that accompany introductions to the region for prospective tourists, but there are few hints at the possibility of experiencing anything 'spiritual' (スピリチュアル) as there are in the Miyazaki Japanese language site (*Shinwa*). Nor do tourism oriented websites like "Explore Crete" indicate how one can stand in the exact spot where the Judgment of Paris took place ("Mt. Ida").

The tower in Miyazaki City was nationally famous even as it was being constructed, taking on two names. *Ametsuchi no Motohashira* was the formal name, while *Hakkouchiu no Tou* was informal. *Ametsuchi* is literally paired opposites in Chinese characters signifying "sky and earth," but in the context of the Shinto religion it means heaven and its gods meeting the soil and waters of mortal existence – the Japanese archipelago – as whipped up by the lovemaking of Izanami and Izanagi. Literally "Eight Cords One Roof" (八紘一宇), *Hakkouchiu* was a four-character term used in a white paper by Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro for underlining a new sense of expansionist purpose, invoking "the founding spirit" for the nation on both foreign and domestic levels (Iriye 104). How to redefine the meaning of being a subject of the Japanese Empire in a politically expedient way by garnering unquestioning support for colonizing and administering the homelands of fellow Asians? *Hakkouchiu* was taken from the ancient *Nihon Shoki* and revived as an expression of universal brotherhood for the sake of the modern imperial state, a means of proclaiming a 'new order' where 'eight

directions' converged under a tent of Japanese protection, expelling Western imperialism from East Asia and establishing a 'Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere' with Japan's imperial authority at the center.

There were growing uncertainties in the world in 1940. In an imperial rescript dated September 27, 1940, Hirohito expressed how *Hakkouchiu*, this "teaching of Our imperial ancestors," was something to "think about day and night" (Bix 383). Shortly thereafter the Tripartite Pact was signed with Germany and Italy. No one in power or among the Japanese populace at large could foresee precisely what horrors were to come from this ill-advised diplomatic move. For this was the period when patriotic fervor was stirred to its peak. To stand at the base of the tower in Miyazaki, "home of the gods that created Japan" was therefore to feel as if standing at the *center of the center* of the world.



A 4-sen 1942 postal issue featuring the *Hakkouchiu* Tower juxtaposed with Mt. Fuji (which is nowhere near Miyazaki). Note the Imperial emblem is center top and not to be upstaged by either work of man or nature. The tower found its way onto the 10-sen bill as well.



Though conceived in wartime as a means of bolstering nationalist sentiment and tourism to Miyazaki, the tower is now called "Heiwadai" - or "Tower of Peace." The sign invites the visitor to clap hands and listen for the echo. (Photo by the author.)

Reaching out

The term *Hakkouchiu* was to Japan what the "manifest destiny," an expression coined by obscure political writer John O'Sullivan, was to 19th-century Americans with visions of transcontinental expansion. The following paragraph from O'Sullivan contains the same reference to divine sanction and metaphors from architecture that are present in the calls-for-peace mission statements of Japanese propagandists:

The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American greatness. In its magnificent domain of space and time, the nation of many nations is destined to manifest to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High -- the Sacred and the True. Its floor shall be a hemisphere -- its roof the firmament of

the star-studded heavens, and its congregation an Union of many Republics, comprising hundreds of happy millions, calling, owning no man master, but governed by God's natural and moral law of equality, the law of brotherhood – of 'peace and good will amongst men...' ("John O'Sullivan")

It was during the administration of James K. Polk, the eleventh president, that work began on the Washington Monument. Polk's was an administration that saw huge land grabs for the United States, most significantly the Mexican Cession which was the largest single gain of territory since the Louisiana Purchase. The treaty which sealed the deal with Mexico, against which the United States fought a two-year war, was signed just five months prior to the laying of the cornerstone of the world's greatest obelisk for memorializing the nation's greatest isolationist. Ironically, following the treaty a team of U.S. surveyors, unsung heroes in the saga of Manifest Destiny, braved arduous conditions in the desert wilderness to place seven markers between El Paso and San Diego in an effort to settle boundary misunderstandings once and for all. Not surprisingly, the shapes of

those markers were obelisks (CBP).

Both projects were propelled along by a remarkable degree of enthusiasm, and in Japan's case with special cooperation from newspaper agencies. Much of the work for the Miyazaki monument was volunteer, including that of the sculptor-designer himself, Hinago Jitsuzo (1892-1945) (Mimata 28, 93). Altogether some 66,600 people participated, including schoolchildren, with a total cost reaching as much as 670,000 yen from the national budget (being several hundred million yen in today's money) (Mimata 91). A total of 1,789 cut stones were sent from within and without Japan proper, the latter being from Japanese who were colonizing the mainland, or engaged in actually fighting the Chinese. The governor of Miyazaki who contrived the scheme visualized the stones as reflections of the international *Hakkouichiu* spirit of the era (Mimata 92). In reality, virtually all of the stones submitted from abroad came as booty, sent by Japanese community associations or appropriated by war weary Japanese soldiers under orders of their superiors, and not as formal congratulatory tributes from foreign governments. Not even



Vintage postcard dating to the 1930's by E. L. Crandall showing the Washington Monument in moonlight with cherry trees in full bloom. The trees were gifts from the people of Japan given to the city in 1912. (Collection of the author.)



An obelisk gravemarker at the Yokohama Foreign General Cemetery. (Photo by author.)

the contribution sent by ‘friendly’ Nazi Germany was ‘official,’ but rather an offering from a mining company (“Heiwa no Tou” 4).

Stones for the interior of the Washington Monument came from around the country – or the ‘empire’ as it were – with Alabama leading the way in the donating of commemorative stones in 1849 (Jacob 30). Some of the offerings received by the private Washington National Monument Society did not come from actual states, but rather clubs, unions, businesses and even marble from the Cherokee Nation (Jacob 150) which only a decade earlier had been unconstitutionally forced off its homeland in the southeast and herded like cattle into Indian Territory (what is now Oklahoma). A wave of anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiment in the mid-1850’s resulted in the seizure of the society’s records by the Know-Nothing Party (named for their secrecy in characteristically stating they “know nothing” about their party). The Know-Nothings’ indignation was fed by Pope Pius IX’s gift of a stone from the razed Temple of Concord. The Know-Nothing movement was short-lived, but that did not help to reinvigorate efforts toward completing the monument. The interference of the Know-Nothing Party, combined with the rising momentum of sectional squabbles and funding woes, brought the construction of the obelisk to a halt for the next twenty years (Rizzotti).

Mystical roots

Contained within the structure of the Washington Monument are also stones supplied by Masonic lodges from around the country. George Washington was himself a well-known Freemason; his burial notably was conducted according to the rites of that fraternal organization “dedicated to the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God.” The laying of the

cornerstone of the Washington Monument was a Masonic rite; one of the leading speakers of the day a Grand Master, Benjamin B. French, wore the Masonic apron that Washington wore when he laid the cornerstone of the capitol building (Rizzotti). In origin, the Freemasons are said to have evolved from the guilds of cathedral builders in the Middle Ages. But because of the organization’s secrecy and willingness to embrace all creeds, fundamentalist Christians have to this day viewed the Washington Monument as an Egyptian phallus, symbolizing the lost penis of Osiris, and as such a rejection of Christianity. The layout of Washington, D.C. is itself perceived to be an expression of Satanism with its “goat head” shape. The towering monument on the National Mall for the ‘true follower of Christ’ is the geometric center of a conspiracy to deprive the American people of salvation (Stewart).

Perhaps it is because of the animistic nature of Japan’s indigenous Shinto religion that there is no real need to build high. No context is offered for calling on humanity to reach for the heavens. Mountains, trees and the sun are themselves possessed by spirits and exist as monuments unto themselves. The highest manmade structure on a shrine precinct would typically be the gate, or *torii*, which is the demarcation point indicating where the external world ends and sacred ground begins. It is written in Chinese characters as ‘a place for birds’ – the creature which, at least before the invention of the airplane – was observed to flit between heaven and earth. Otherwise, attempts at upstaging the surrounding nature in manmade design is rare. Typically, the grounds are surrounded by evergreen trees, the only truly awe-inspiring vertical ‘architecture’ in view; though where they have direct connections with the Imperial Household, shrines tend to be large in scale, if not exactly

towering. There is nothing ambiguous about the design of the Miyazaki tower as Shinto-inspired. Here was thought to be the site of the Emperor Jimmu's palace, direct descendant of Amaterasu and progenitor of the Imperial line (Mimata 94). Through that claim a right to rule the entire world was asserted, as was the racial supremacy of the Japanese people, for they had been blessed with a divine pedigree. The sculptor Hinago found his inspiration for the tower design in a zigzag-shaped paper talisman (known as a *gohei*) used in Shinto for 'clothing' sacred objects (commonly, the 'god tree'). While praying at the Miyazaki Shrine for enlisting the assistance of the gods in creating his monument, wrote Hinago, he visualized the talisman and the manly cry of Itsunosemikoto (god of grain), older brother of Jimmu, picturing the warrior's "shield fused together with the talisman" and (quoting a widely known passage from the *Kojiki*) "sprouting wildly like young reeds" (Mimata 29).

Japan is essentially a 'wood, paper and ceramic' culture where spectacular monumentality in stone renderings of religious symbols and figureheads has not been a trend. The oldest towers in Japan, the pagodas, are made of timber and designed to encase Buddhist relics.

Since Babylon, a repository for the sacred physical remains of holy men has been a feature of religious architecture. Through China the so-called relics of the Buddha, reduced to the minutest of sizes, were transported by specialized carriers to Japan. The first pagoda for the enshrinement of these relics was constructed at Nara in 585 (no longer extant). Only for a brief period were pagodas central features of temple precincts. Up to the time of Shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi eleven centuries later, temple construction was pursued with enthusiasm, though in later years pagodas were hijacked for political purposes as physical

manifestations of 'prayer tributes' to the military elite from anyone who might benefit from their favor, whether daimyo or merchant. They had evolved into something quite different from their original purpose (Akiyama 212-15).



Aramitama, the agitated state of a Shinto spirit, representing the warrior. Similar ceramic figures are placed at the other three corners, representing farmers, fishermen and workers. The *shide* above the head mark a sacred space. (Photo by author.)

On the other hand, while the obelisk was no receptacle, it was equally concerned with the dead as a symbol of the sun god Ra and his ability to restore life to the lifeless. Often obelisks were placed in pairs before temples as protective markers (just as in the rare case of twin pagodas at Nara's Yakushiji). In the language of the ancient Egyptians they were called *tejen* meaning "defense" – whereas in Greek they were "prongs for roasting" – *obeliskos* – and were plated in gold to symbolize their association with the gods and the resurrecting powers of the sun (Lunghi).

Ironically, though as a solid rock the obelisk in concept was not intended as an actual structure for entry, the highly modified Washington Monument has an observation level for visitors within. Yet despite their appearance

as elegant towers with hand-railed ‘verandas’ ranging all the way to the top floor, pagodas are not typically designed with accessible interiors for enabling, for example, the function of an observation deck for viewing the landscape below (Suzuki).

Whether obelisk or pagoda, the purpose at inception is a common religious one. Pagodas are generally not mobile, though obelisks carved by the ancient Egyptians have found their way to destinations as distant as 19th-century New York; the engineering feat behind the moving of such massive and heavy objects is as intriguing as their actual quarrying, carving and raising. Wood is light, flammable, organic and impermanent even as it serves as material for an ‘eternal’ reliquary, but any attempt to ship a Japanese pagoda to another part of the world would entail onerous and potentially disastrous disassembly, for they are works of intricately connected parts involving a completely different kind of skill than sculpting and raising of what is basically a giant stone phallus.

In character, therefore, while both demark sacred spaces, the obelisk is unambiguously masculine for its shape, texture, inorganic origins and life-affirming properties; whereas the pagoda consists of material once fed by the sun and the soil, impermanent even in death as rootless wood, yet in its way strong and flexible as a womb-like treasury for enshrining holy remains. These applications of design will influence attitudes and perceptions of how a monument should look for a people who have inherited a unique fabric of expectations cultivated over time as tradition.

Once ‘erect,’ the Egyptian obelisks with their aura of eternity, therefore, contrast with the more feminine ‘skirted’ pagodas, serving to inspire and elicit self-searching and even self-doubt. In the raising of the obelisk in New York’s Central Park in January 1881, a gift

given by Egypt to commemorate the opening of the Suez Canal, Secretary of State William Maxwell Evarts noted the celebrated object, if it could talk, would ask just how much humanity believed in the perpetuity of its wealth and “the pith and vigor of its manhood” after having witnessed more history than anyone living could possibly imagine (NOVA). As witnesses to history, the flammable pagoda’s vulnerability lends an air of a more modest grandeur.

History’s hangovers

Hinago’s opus, or more specifically the political impetus that inspired it, was safe from any searing criticism or cynical quips. A law enforcement unit of the time known as the Special Higher Police (特別高等警察) made certain the political order was not threatened by radicals or cynics with disparaging words about empire. It was not until after the war that the tower was drastically altered by order of GHQ’s representative in Miyazaki, its name changed to “Peace Tower” – and the four-character phrase and ceramic warlike spirit (*aramitama*) ‘erased’ (Mimata 200). Shortly after a decade had passed since the end of the Allied Occupation the tower was restored to its previous appearance out of respect for its artistic integrity, but not without controversy.

The tower once more basked in the limelight as a symbol of “world unity” in a wholly different context as the Japanese starting point for the torch relay leading up to the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. And yet, even after a half century had passed since the conclusion of the Second World War, many of Miyazaki’s citizens were still uncomfortable with the tower’s wartime associations and the looting that went into supplying stone for the base (Mimata 118). Efforts to have it more accurately described in Miyazaki Prefecture’s

tourist information persist to this day, and it stands as a cold memorial for Japanese and foreigner alike who suffered the consequences of such propaganda. While no work of preserved wartime art may be powerful enough to resurrect militant nationalism on a sweeping level, the tower's role as artifact remains mired in ambiguity. Meanwhile, those with vivid memories of direct war experience decrease year by year.

Most suspicions relating to the Washington Monument nowadays pertain to its Freemason associations, and the agitation in that regard is limited to a small but vociferous group of Christians or New Age enthusiasts with their murky conspiracy theories about occultism and phallic energy ("Washington, D.C."). For Americans today, the obelisk's connection with its namesake personality may not necessarily bring to mind associations with past expansionist policies. But the 'What would Washington do?' questions have occurred to 'believers' of all political stripes. In July 1848 young Congressman Abraham Lincoln, opposed to war with Mexico, aimed criticism at President Polk, invoking the Washington name in an anti-war speech on the floor of the House of Representatives:

"Let him remember he sits where Washington sat, and so remembering, let him answer, as Washington would answer. As a nation should not, and the Almighty will not, be evaded, so let him attempt no invasion--no equivocation" (Lincoln).

In July of the same year he would find himself and President Polk among the dignitaries attending the cornerstone-laying ceremony ("National Mall and Memorial Parks

Sites").

Nor is the Washington Monument necessarily a something-for-everybody national landmark. It is well-known that the capital city was in part built by Negro slaves and that Washington himself was a slaveholder, though a reluctant one at times. He has been criticized for not risking his bipartisan support and failing to take the lead on abolishing slavery, though arguably doing so might have severely jeopardized national unity. The understandable ambivalence African Americans feel toward George Washington receives regular media attention, noting most recently how some black citizens of Washington, D.C. were not deeply troubled by the earthquake damage the obelisk suffered in 2011, speaking of this supposed symbol of solidarity as something that did not really belong to them anyway (Thompson). Planners for the South Carolina National Association for the Advancement of Colored People rally to mark Martin Luther King Day (January 15) in 2011 were observed to have boxed in the replica of the Houdon statue at the Columbia State House, an apparent attempt to 'disgrace' Washington by rendering him invisible for the time being as an irrelevance ("NAACP"). There are well over 400 schools in the United States named after the first president. In 1997 one of them, an elementary school in predominantly black New Orleans, changed its name from George Washington - a name it had been known by for 74 years - to Dr. Charles Richard Drew Elementary. (The doctor was a pioneer in exploring ways of preserving blood plasma and an opponent of the U.S. army's segregating blood by race.) It is not uncommon for black schools in states of the Old Confederacy to take on new names of those with whom African Americans identify with deliverance from bondage, but throwing out the name of the nation's foremost founding father

bore an unsettling element of blasphemy for many Americans who view the assault as political correctness out of control (Sack). One can safely infer, therefore, that the monument dedicated to the man on the dollar bill is for some Americans merely a familiar physical landscape feature, an obelisk for obelisks' sake, detached from its creators' original intent – or at the very worst a nagging reminder of a long history of racial injustice (“Reassessing”).

Appeasing the gods

The ritual of laying the cornerstone in Freemasonry shares compelling similarities with Shinto, especially where they take on the appearance of ‘social custom’ detached from a purely religious character. Freemasonry is a fraternal organization, not an organized religion. Shinto to the typical Japanese is mostly if not entirely a local concern, with neighborhood festivals and events focused in and around the local shrine precinct simply because it is the traditional wide open space where large groups can gather. The so-called practice of Shinto can be thought of as a pattern of habits by which Japanese partake in ritual expressing a longing for purity and renewal. These habits part from any organized religion with its hierarchy of holy men, code of ethics, obsession with life after death, or beliefs in a single Supreme Being (which under the domination of state Shinto had been the emperor). The Freemason Grand Master and the Shinto priest both invoke higher powers in preparing a site for construction in a prayer for the safety of the workers.

In Shinto's animistic view in any piece of ground there exists a spirit realm which possesses a dual character of gentleness (*nigimitama*) and agitation (*aramitama*), qualities, incidentally, given human faces in two of the ceramic statues at the base of the

Miyazaki Peace Tower. When mortals upset the surface with unnatural structures for their own vanity, they pose dangers of risking bad relations with the spirit dwelling within if something is not done to placate it. The *jichinsai* (地鎮祭) ceremony functions to seek favor with the spirit by first purifying the ground (Endo). A tent is pitched, usually one adorned with celebratory red and white stripes. Inside is constructed a kind of portable Shinto shrine known as a *himorogi*, basically a branch of evergreen placed on an altar facing southward. The priest shakes the *onusa*, a stick of *sakaki* wood to which is affixed *shide*, strips of white folded paper comprising the *gohei* discussed earlier. The spirit is then summoned and given a food offering, after which a prayer is made for a completion of the construction without accidents. A more focused purification then ensues at all four corners and in the center of the prospective building site. The ceremony comes to an end when the offerings are withdrawn and the spirit is sent on its way. Generally in this process the ground is opened up, first with the trimming of the grass with a purified scythe; then a hoe is used to dig a hole into which some iron object for enshrinement is placed (“Jichinsai”). For grand projects such as the Tokyo Skytree, the *jichinsai* was attended by row upon row of relevant people of importance, dressed in their finest, sitting in solemn attention in the large ‘tent’ as the president of Tobu Railway and the president of Tokyo Skytree stood before a tidily squared block of sand to represent the ground (“Prayer for Safety”).

Squared edges are as important to the Freemasons as is purity to the Shintoists. “Have you applied the square to the obelisk, and is the work square?” asked Most Worshipful Grand Master Myron M. Parker of his deputy at the dedication ceremony for the Washington

Monument in 1885. The deputy answered in the affirmative, adding a word of praise for the workmen (Rizzotti). The laying of the cornerstone is conducted by the Grand Master in Masonic attire, including bejeweled apron and white gloves, but also actual tools of the trade: level, plumb, square, trowel and setting mall. A triumphal arch is placed to indicate the ceremonial site. Usually the northwest corner receives the stone, though it can be placed at the base of a permanent flag pole or other object of symbolic significance. The prayer of the Master typically acknowledges his “immemorial right to gather and dedicate Lodges, Public Buildings and memorials to our two patron saints... Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist” (“Guide”). This greeting is usually topped off with the following invocation:

Great Architect of the Universe, Fountain of light, and life, peace and joy, vouchsafe we humbly beseech thee from thy Heavenly Temple thy blessing upon us, and our present work. Direct us with thy most gracious favor, and further us with thy continual help, that this work begun, continued and ended in thee, may glorify thy holy name.

Send down the abundance of thy grace upon these Lodges and its Officers, here met in thy name and presence, to lay the symbolic cornerstone of this (Name of Lodge or Building) erected to commemorate your patron Saints. See that nothing may hinder the completion of this work as a tribute of gratitude to thee, and of affection to thy servants. Built with no untempered mortar, but cemented in unity and strength and fashioned in symmetry and beauty, may this Lodge be the sign and symbol of power and glory

of one united Brotherhood. May the present work of laying this foundation be true to the square, the level and the plumb, inspire individual character that shall be true to the principles of justice and righteousness of purity and equity and of universal liberty.

Incline thine ear and hear the voice of our prayer, and may our labors rest in your everlasting arms, and our waking be the grand summons – of thy children to the joy and triumph of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, in the City and Temple not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. AMEN (“Guide”)

The prayer seeks a divine approval as does the Shinto version, but less apologetically, humbly hinting that there is room for praise where praise is due. Note the claim that the work of human hands coordinated in a spirit of brotherhood is a worthy symbol of “power and glory.”

Time capsules

One curious feature of the cornerstone laying ceremony is the role of the “box of deposits” – another term for ‘time capsule,’ a custom that spread beyond Masonic practice into society at large. A space under the cornerstone is usually ‘dug’ to accommodate a container filled with contemporary objects and literature for the eyes of distant future generations. These capsules sometimes are targeted by thieves or lose their coordinates. The one laid by George Washington for the U.S. Capitol was never found (*Nine Most Wanted*). Will Jarvis, one of the world’s leading authorities on time capsules, observes they are propaganda statements glorifying the present, often containing items in pristine condition that have

scarcely known the human touch, and are collected according to a vague “notional futurescape.” Generations in centuries to come would more than likely be unmoved with the quaint braggadocio of the long ago dead (Brand).

In a sense, the time capsule is like a funeral, just as a tower functions as a ‘tombstone.’ Capsule-making and tower-building fit hand-in-glove. Gathering materials for a time-capsule is a way of celebrating something shared while recognizing the inevitable transience of the present and its eventual transformation into past. Just as funerals are not really for the dead, time capsules are not really for the people of the future. Jarvis notes that nothing of great import has been learned from the time capsules that have been opened thus far (Brand).

Likewise, the inherent optimism of a tower rising into the heavens, casting its shadow like a giant sundial, belongs squarely to the present and whatever cherished hopes the present holds for “a gentle future.” This writer was an elementary school pupil during the Seattle World’s Fair of 1962 where the theme was lifestyle in the 21st century. The fair’s grand symbol was the 184-meter high Space Needle, a structure resembling a flying saucer on stilts, what we children were led to imagine would be the look of a typical home when we were old enough to be the grandparents that we are now, well into the second decade of the new millennium. Such was not to be, but we were all gently called upon to have faith in modernity’s shapely machines of convenience – and our confidence in their benevolence was unbending.

The New York World’s Fair of 1939 was also based on a theme of a utopian “tomorrow.” Symbolized in grand style with its perisphere and 210-meter high trylon spire, the fair has been described as a defining event for evolving the consumer culture of convenience we know

today (“1939”). It was also the human race’s final flicker of joy and excitement before becoming engulfed in more global conflict. With a world conflagration not long off, the Westinghouse Corporation put forth a special copper alloy version of the old Masonic time capsule bearing the tangible fruits of what Tocqueville observed to be “clear, free, original and inventive power of the mind” that “Americans always display” (Tocqueville) : microfilm records, a pack of Camel cigarettes, a kewpie doll, a Sears-Roebuck catalog and numerous others. It was referred to as the “The Time Capsule of Cupaloy: Deemed Capable of Resisting the Effects of Time for Five Thousand Years – Preserving an Account of Universal Achievements Embedded in the Grounds of the New York World’s Fair, 1939.” Its contents were selected by a committee of authorities on every subject to supply a “complete record of our civilization.” As the well-groomed man in the fair’s promotional film further claimed, “It will still be here when the rest of this place is nothing but dust” (“1939”).

Was it optimism or hubris? In Japan the Westinghouse project was observed with keen interest. Might not the *Hakkouichiu* Tower in Miyazaki City provide a good occasion for such a concept? The *Kigensetsu* was a year away – and already the government was planning on a means of capturing and preserving the record of events for the next thousand years. In the tower’s base is a secluded room wherein an octagonal hole of slightly over a meter in diameter lies the capsule. Contained within it are said to be the blueprints for the tower itself, some demographic data pertaining to Miyazaki prefecture at the time of ‘burial,’ and a record of *Kigensetsu* events imprinted on bronze. What will the citizens of Miyazaki be thinking when they uncover such ‘treasures’ in centuries to come (Mimata 37)?

Meaning

On the eighteenth of March 2011, a full week after the devastating earthquake that struck Japan's eastern coast, the nation was treated to 'uplifting' news. Early in the afternoon, construction of Tokyo's Skytree, already the highest man-made structure in the land, had peaked at 634 meters. As of this writing, it is the highest tower of its kind in the world, a distinction not likely to endure should China find a way to add 'just' twenty-five more meters to its iconic 610-meter Canton Tower (AFP).

But to what purpose?

The digital beaming of electromagnetic signals for television broadcasting purposes is performed perfectly well by far shorter towers. According to the English-language website of the developer, Tobu Railway, the tower is intended to define a space where "a new environmentally-friendly town will appear as people from around the world gather to create a new culture" ("New Tower"). The tower, having cost a whopping 60 billion yen to build, incorporates structural and aesthetic elements borrowed from centuries-old indigenous earthquake-resistant Buddhist architecture, and symbolizes a "gentle future (*yasashii mirai*)" – what we can interpret to mean a new and peaceful business prosperity for Sumida Ward, the immediate neighborhood (Tokyo Sukai Tsurii). It is a private enterprise, not a government project, and lacks the emotional symbolism of Tokyo Tower as national phoenix ascending from the ashes of defeat after World War II.

Perhaps the subjects of Ptolemy I and Ptolemy II were eager to brag about their new lighthouse on the island of Pharos off Alexandria, a port city as remarkable for its

cultural and commercial significance in 280 B. C.E. as Tokyo was in 2011 A.D. Counted among the Seven Wonders of the World, "the Pharos" attained adequate enough renown among Mediterranean societies that the name itself came to be the word for 'lighthouse' in a number of Romance languages – and, after weathering the passage of sixteen centuries, was the last to vanish of the Seven Wonders that did not survive the ravages of time, severely weakened by the same architectural nightmare that rocked Japan in 2011. Alexandria, one of many new cities started by Alexander the Great throughout his empire, would have been a major world city even without its celebrated lighthouse, but standing at 134 meters the Pharos was, as travelers' journals reveal, a source of deep amazement to all who viewed it, whether from sea or land. Like Tokyo Skytree, the Pharos was a tourist attraction, possibly even before its completion, its construction commemorated on a Greek coin in circulation at the time. But unlike the vision of a "gentle future" with its affirmations of local building tradition suggested in its design, the Pharos was the work of a Greek architect using Greek building ideas, employed by a self-appointed 'pharaoh' from Macedonia, Ptolemy I. Alexandria was a city defined and molded by invaders (Krystek).

The lighthouse served a clear practical purpose. It would eventually be adapted to supply bright light and smoke to enable navigators at sea to get their bearings with greater ease, but its sheer scale was awe-inspiring without enhancements. As superlative, it provided a sense of local identity or "place" for the people living in the city. So, too, does the Tokyo Skytree serve as a broadcasting tower in a practical sense, and as a point of local pride, it offers status as a premier jewel in the statistical crown for television tower height.

When regional politics is at work, towers are entangled in the trappings of civil religion. This tendency, as I have hoped to demonstrate in this paper, is observable in both East and West. Towers reach for a vain semblance of immortality as self-congratulatory tributes to the hopes and values of the communities that spawn them, ostensibly for the eyes of generations unborn who are expected to feel awe, envy or pity for whatever or whomever the monument was specifically created. In effect, towers are triumphal totems for the living that in a very short time transform into grave-markers for their era and its people. Yet things can backfire when historical events countermand power agendas; original intentions can be twisted or reinterpreted with changing times. Essentially, all towers are ‘Skytrees,’ nourished by the soft soil of ancient myth, history and wishful thinking.

The namesake object of Miyazaki’s Peace Tower Park stands forlorn, ranked low on the list of places to see in the prefecture, never mind the entire Japanese nation (“Miyazaki Kankou Supottu”). The obelisk in Washington, on the other hand, remains the salient soaring feature of the National Mall, the full sweep of which was named by Fodor’s as one of the top ten all-American landmarks (“Top Ten”). Recently the monument underwent structural alterations to make its elevator safer, but history demonstrates that advancing years and social trends may change any monument on levels of meaning that no construction crew can touch.

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Whether ancient or modern, the architectural enterprise of tower building embodies the hopes and ambitions of its builders. Even when a modern tower is ostensibly designed as a broadcasting transmitter, it may be taller than the height needed to adequately serve its practical function. Clearly, it is a vehicle for promoting an agenda. This paper provides a cultural comparison of two towers that were highly political in nature. The towers were built by two superpowers, once rivals, that face each other across the Pacific Ocean; both have vastly different histories, cultures, and political systems. Nevertheless, both sought to use the towers to raise the morale of their respective populations while the powers engaged in expansionist ambitions. Worth comparing are the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., a product of the age of Manifest Destiny in the middle of the 19th century, and the Ametsuchi no Motohashira in Miyazaki Prefecture commemorating the peak of imperial Japan's Hakkouichiu vision in the middle of the 20th.
